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**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.**

**Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Markup**

**May 13, 2011**

Thank you for your hard work Mr. Chairman, I believe you did the best you could with the allocation you received. Also thank you for including my report language as well as the report language of other members of the Subcommittee. I think there were only two items by members on my side that weren't included in the mark.

The Committee recommendation for Military Construction includes \$483,302,000 for construction/replacement of Department of Defense Education Activity schools (DODEA). A total of 15 schools, six schools in the United States and nine schools at overseas installations will be refurbished with this funding.

Mr. Chairman, providing the funds for DODEA schools will not only help our servicemembers children get a quality education in safe facility, but it will also give our servicemembers one less thing to worry about.

Mr. Chairman I was pleased to see that the Committee recommendation includes \$1.1 billion for the Medical Center Replacement in Germany. As you know, we treat a large proportion of serious casualties from the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters there, and I am pleased to see that we are making this important investment.

In addition, I believe there is sound logic for your reductions to the Milcon title. I believe the Committee should recapture bid and P & D savings on previously appropriated military construction projects. With our current fiscal situation, this simply makes sense.

I noticed that Mr. Moran's parking cap language was included. I am sure that Mr. Moran is very pleased.

Now regarding the report on Charter Schools, I believe my side has some concerns regarding the Charter School language included. I think Ms. McCollum wanted to get at this issue as well and I think we can find a solution to make everyone more comfortable. I know you have expressed to me and the staff your interest in this as well.

In the Veterans Affairs section of the bill, I note the \$58.3 billion discretionary account is \$1.85 billion above the FY 2011 enacted level, while we are also providing full funding of \$69.5 billion for mandatory VA programs.

While I would like to give more resources to Veterans Affairs, I am pleased that we are building on the progress made by the Democratic Majority in the last Congress.

Mr. Chairman, I know you share my deep concerns about the backlog in VA claims. When the Secretary testified, this issue was on the minds of many Members on this subcommittee, and I hope we will continue to monitor this situation and make sure we address any issues that arise.

Mr. Chairman thank you for putting the major construction projects back in the mark. Those projects are very important to the VA. I understand what you were trying to do and maybe we could include language addressing New Starts for future requests. I look forward to working with you on that issue as we move through the process.

Finally, Mr Chairman, in the General Provisions section there are a few items I want to mention, namely Section 413 which addresses Davis Bacon and the Section 414 E-Verify item. Now I have my staff looking into this issue but I believe that this has already been implemented in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and this language is unnecessary.

Moving on to Davis Bacon, now I know you have your beliefs but the House has already taken

two votes on this issue. The first vote taken to include a limitation on Davis Bacon (King amendment) was during H.R. 1 and it failed 189-233. The second vote regarding limitation on Davis Bacon (Sessions amendment) was taken during consideration of the FAA Bill and it failed 183-238.

I am concerned that including this language will erode bipartisan support for this bill. Having said that, I know Mr. Dicks has publicly stated his commitment to work with our colleagues to respectfully work out these differences and report a bipartisan bill.

Now Mr. Chairman you have done a lot of responsible things in this bill but this is not governing in a responsible manner.

To end on a positive note I would like to thank the staff for all their hard work. They have worked very hard to get us to this point.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

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